

# Memorandum

To : BOB HARVEY  
District 8, Transportation Planning

Date : August 4, 1995  
File : Yucca Mtn.

From : DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - District 9

Subject : Route 127

You had requested an update on the possibility of Route 127 being used to haul high-level nuclear waste. Here's the latest:

Yucca Mtn. may be designated as an interim repository (40 -100 years) if one of the seven or eight bills being tossed around in Congress passes. Other bills would select Savannah River, SC or Hanford, WA. What Congress does is anyone's guess.

Currently, we are working with Inyo County and a Consultant who is compiling the O&D data that we collected last Spring. He will also update our RCR, using three scenarios: current conditions; a 20-yr concept without Yucca Mtn.; and, a 20-yr with Yucca Mtn. designated.

DOE is looking at a possible heavy-haul truck (185 tons GVW) scenario if Congress directs them to ship by 1998 or thereabouts. They would still have to design and build the Multiple Purpose Canister (the EIS is out on it now). They are also looking at Rail (possibly a new spurline from Crucero or Ludlow or several other options in Nevada), and also intermodal transfer scenarios. Up to 19 reactors (20%) may still have to ship by truck no matter what; and depending upon which cask they use there could be marginally overweight trucks (96,000 - 115,000 lbs.). We obtained plans that the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (DOE) put together on various scenarios. I can try to get you a copy (let me know if you want one). We've also been in pretty close contact with Nevada DOT, UNLV, UNR, and Yucca Mtn. transportation people, as well as in weekly contact with Inyo County, Yucca Mtn. Repository Assessment Office.

We have asked Sacramento Permits to do computer modeling of the heavy-haul scenario to tell us what impacts it could have and any constraints. Our District Permits Engineer says that "purple rated" bridges/structures should work okay, but vertical curves are questionable (they should be designed according to HDM for minimum sight distance) also, horizontal curves may be a concern, especially for some of our sections. There may be a need for passing lanes, turnouts, shoulder widening, etc. Flash flooding and the high percentage of foreign tourists are also concerns that we have. These extralegal loads may require CHP escort if they cannot operate within 12' lanes. We don't think four lanes will be necessary as the traffic generated looks like anywhere from 1 truck every 3 days, to at the most 12 trucks per day depending on the scenario. About ten percent of the shipments will be due to military weapons production. About 70% of the Nation's total shipments will probably come through the southern route.

There's approximately 30,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste currently sitting at the commercial reactor sites being stored. Our best guess is there's another 13,000 to 15,000 tons of DOE waste from weapons production to be shipped. Yucca Mtn. (if designated) is supposed to hold 70,000 tons capacity but many feel that Congress might remove this capacity limit. The shipments will probably take place over a 25-year span. DOE has been collecting fees from the utility companies (those producing nuclear energy). The funds are being used to do the site

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characterization studies at Yucca Mtn., and Congress appropriates these funds each year. Should Yucca Mtn. be designated (either as an interim or permanent site) there is a possibility of Route 127 being used. Nevada certainly would like to see it used so shipments won't have to go through Las Vegas. The CHP is the lead agency in designating alternate routing for the transport of high-level radioactive materials (the Federal law specifies that Interstates are the preferred routes). Yet the CHP elected to not designate routing other than the Interstates (they de-designated some of the Interstates). However, there is a provision in the law that allows carriers to select the shortest distance route for pick-up and delivery off the Interstate system. This may be a loop hole. In any case, our permit people will probably be involved. If Congress acts on Yucca Mtn. hopefully provisions will be made to mitigate any impacts (but it could become very political). I've been discussing our concerns about potential impacts with DOE for years now. They say it's a State concern/problem if the route becomes designated by the governor (we should not be designating a route that's not adequate for that purpose). But again there's those loopholes. We may be able to get some mitigation through the permitting process. By the way, the CHP feel they can reopen the designation process annually and add routes later, if necessary.

Everything's still pretty much up in the air. Congress will probably do something within the next two months. Meanwhile, we are busy trying to assess potential impacts, develop baseline information and working with our Sacramento Permits people.

Hope this helped some. Let me know if you need more information. You can reach me at Calnet 8-627-0691 or (619) 872-0691.

Sincerely,

KATY WALTON, Chief  
Transportation Planning & Public Transportation

cc: Ken Deboy, Division Chief of Planning